

# Welcome

## *Dennis Keeney*

**Dennis Keeney** is director of the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture, a position he has held since 1988. Keeney is a professor of agronomy at Iowa State University, and past president of the 12,500-member American Society of Agronomy. He holds B.S. and Ph.D. degrees from Iowa State University and a M.S. degree from the University of Wisconsin-Madison where he was a long-time faculty member.

I would like to thank you for sharing your day and your knowledge with us. Our objective for the day is to leave with all of us knowing more about alternate swine systems and more about each other.

Iowa's swine industry has always been in transition. But the sea change that started a few years ago leading to concentration and vertical integration, coupled with record low prices and environmental issues, has left us reeling.

The sponsors and the planning committee of this conference have developed a program not only to discuss production and environmental management in low-cost swine systems such as hoop structures. We also are examining through marketing and added value swine production systems how swine producers and all farmers can get a higher percentage of the consumer dollar.

We will hear more during the sessions,

and we will taste it at breaks and lunch, where many of the foods served will be grown in Iowa, some locally in the Ames area.

I want to acknowledge the many sponsors of the conference:

The Leopold Center, and Rich Pirog, who coordinated the conference;  
ISU Extension and the ISU College of Agriculture;  
Iowa Farm Bureau;  
Iowa Pork Producers Association;  
ISU Pork Industry Center;  
Iowa Beginning Farmer Center;  
Practical Farmers of Iowa;  
ISU Extension Sustainable Agriculture Program; and  
ISU Research and Demonstration Farms.

The members of the planning committee are listed on the conference program in your packet. I would like all members of the planning committee to stand and be recognized. Thank you so much.

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We encourage you to visit the displays of the conference sponsors which you will find in the lobby and break areas. Please stop by the Leopold Center display and sign up for free *Sand County Almanacs*, Iowa River maps, and the newly published full-color guide on IPM for Alfalfa Insects. The prize drawing will take place at our closing coffee at 4:00 p.m. this afternoon.

I also want to recognize the vision and leadership of Dr. Lauren Christian. As you know, Lauren Christian lost a courageous battle with cancer last fall. Lauren Christian was a fantastic scientist, teacher, and person. He was a guiding light for the first swine system options conference and will be greatly missed by all of us. Please join me in a moment of silence in his memory.

This program is based on the successful Swine Systems Conference held three years ago. It seems that more information is transferred by listening to the stories of producers including their production, management, and marketing.

Some of the research we will talk about today, particularly that at the ISU Rhodes Farm, is sponsored through the Leopold Center and its swine hoop research initiative, the so-called "Hoop Group." The Leopold Center has had great success with interdisciplinary approaches to problem-solving when they are based on partnerships between farmers and university researchers and educators. We saw the en-

ergy created from the first conference and that it was generating enthusiasm for such a group. So we helped put this group together. There is some information on this initiative in your packet and in the information booth.

The program starts with a panel covering many of the issues in swine production. It will end with coffee and fellowship. In between there will be much information you can use. Rich Pirog will be giving us some pointers on how to get through the day following the panel.

At the conference three years ago, Dave Struthers, who farms near Collins with his brother Dan and his father Don, learned with us about the hoop structures. Several months later Struthers Farm Inc. put up four hoop structures for finishing hogs. Dave is the part-owner in the operation that includes a 900-sow farrow to finish operation, 800 crop acres, and a 50-head ewe flock. The farm currently has 12 hoop structures. Dave is an active member of the Iowa Farm Bureau and the Pork Producers Association. He hosted a PFI field day last year.

For this conference, Dave is not only a participant in one of the concurrent sessions, but was also on the planning committee. Dave will moderate the general session this morning.

Dave, I turn the program over to you.